

Romans 9:19-29—God’s Sovereignty And Man’s Free Will

Memory Verse

Romans 12:1-2 NKJV

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Revision

Last week we saw that God was not unfair in the way He chose to bless Israel more than He did the nation of Edom. Why? Because neither nation deserved to be God’s chosen people (the nation that God would use to bring the Messiah into the world). It’s not as though both nations earned the privilege and then God only rewarded one of them. No, neither nation was worthy, but God, in His sovereignty, reserves the right to bless one nation more than another.

This also applies to individuals when it comes to how God distributes spiritual gifts—“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills” (1 Corinthians 12:11), as well as talents like musical ability etc—“For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. ¹⁵ And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey” (Matthew 25:14-15 NKJV).

We also saw that God is sovereign over the affairs of nations, the circumstances of our lives, and He will achieve His purposes even if we oppose Him. He can do this because He knows everything: God has perfect foreknowledge—He knows the free choices we will make before we make them. However, God will never violate the free will of any individual—foreknowledge is not foreordaining or predestinating, it’s simply just knowing something in advance (see Romans 8:29). With Paul’s example of Pharaoh, God allowed Pharaoh to make up his own mind before He hardened Pharaoh’s heart; Pharaoh deliberately and purposefully hardened his own heart at least six times before God confirmed His choice and gave the Pharaoh over to what he wanted.

The warning for us is that if we continue to harden our own hearts over time, like the Pharaoh did, our hearts can become so hard that it becomes impossible to respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit—we sear our conscience and become deaf or dull to His voice. Consider that 94% of adult Christians committed their life to God by the age of 18. Only 6% became Christians after the age of 18. Why is this? Because the Holy Spirit is convicting all mankind from their youth, and if while they are young they learn to not listen to God’s voice, then by the time they reach adulthood, their heart is already very hard, and the chances of them being saved are very slim.

Application: This is why children’s ministries are so important—children are the future and lifeblood of the church: If the Church is losing it’s youth, then it is dying. Consider that the devil is doing a great job of inoculating our young people from the gospel—using lies like evolution and homosexuality and gender fluidity to vaccinate them against the truth. Tragically, the church, by and large, is allowing this to happen, by failing to equip their youth to both understand and defend their faith in God and His Word. Therefore, because many of our youth are not trained in the Scriptures, and do not know how to defend their faith—they do not know *why* the gospel is true and *why* satan’s lies are wrong—they are being lost to the world. The first responsibility for equipping our youth rests with the Christian parents of their children, and then secondly the church, who should be equipping and helping the parents, (especially the fathers) to effectively fulfil the obligation they have to their children; “*And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord*” Ephesians 6:4 NKJV.

A general outline of Romans chapters 9-11

Israel is the only nation in the world where God has revealed their past, present, and future.

- Chapter 9: Israel's *past* election—God is sovereign
- Chapter 10: Israel's *present* rejection—God will judge sin wherever it is
- Chapter 11: Israel's *future* restoration—God keeps His promises, He is faithful even when His people are not

Outline of Romans chapter 9

In Romans chapter 9, Paul defends the character of God. He looks at Israel's past history and shows how God's dealing with Israel actually demonstrate four attributes of God's character:

- God's Faithfulness (vs 1-13)—“Well then, has God failed to fulfill his promise to Israel? No...” (v 6 NLT)
- God's Righteousness (vs 14-18)—“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!” (v 14)
- God's Justice (vs 19-29)—“You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault?” (v 19)
- God's Grace (vs 30-33)—“What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith” (v 30)

Romans 9:19-29—God's Sovereignty And Man's Free Will

Outline for today's message, Romans 9:19-29

1. Does God's right to choose our circumstances mean that man is not responsible for how he chooses to respond to those circumstances? (vs 19-21)
2. Does God have the right to glorify Himself as He sees fit? (vs 22–24)
3. God's plan for the church—God promises to call those who were not His people, to be His people (vs 25-29)

Romans 9:1-29 NKJV

I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; ⁵ of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

⁶ But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, ⁷ nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” ⁸ That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. ⁹ For this is the word of promise: “At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.”

¹⁰ And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac ¹¹ (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), ¹² it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.” ¹³ As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”

¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.” ¹⁶ So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.” ¹⁸ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

¹⁹ You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” ²⁰ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour?

²² What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

²⁵ As He says also in Hosea: “I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved.” ²⁶ “And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ There they shall be called sons of the living God.”

²⁷ Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. ²⁸ For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.” ²⁹ And as Isaiah said before: “Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah.”

1. Does God’s right to choose our circumstances mean that man is not responsible for how he chooses to respond to those circumstances?

Romans 9:19-21 NKJV

You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” ²⁰ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour?

First, let’s put this into the correct context. We have previously learned that God is sovereign over the nations (God chose Israel to be His chosen people over the Edomites, see Romans 9:10-13) and also the circumstances of individuals (“For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth”—Romans 9:17 NKJV). So in verse 19 Paul addresses the next concern or accusation that he anticipates people may have against God:

You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” (NKJV)

Well then, you might say, “Why does God blame people for not responding [to Him]? Haven’t they simply done what he makes them do?” (NLT)

You will say to me, Why then does He still find fault and blame us [for sinning]? For who can resist and withstand His will? (AMP)

This is people questioning God’s justice or fairness. Is God really just or fair in making people morally accountable to Himself, when He is the One who controls their circumstances? It’s the age old argument against personal responsibility, *“I couldn’t help it, he made me do it”*. For example, someone might try to excuse their wrong behaviour in the following way, *“If he hadn’t been so mean to me, I wouldn’t have hit him; therefore my violent response it’s not my fault, I’m not responsible for the wrong choice I just made”*.

Another way of expressing this argument against personal responsibility and moral accountability, is blaming who we are and the way we behave on our environment (remember that “environment” is just another way of describing the circumstances that we grew up in): *“I was raised like this, so I can’t help being like this.”* Taken to the extreme, people may say, “I’m only a sinner because I have been raised in a sinful world”, and they effectively deny the doctrine of original sin, that all men are born sinners.

However, there are two clear rebuttals to this false thinking. Firstly, Ezekiel chapter 18 describes what we see all too often in the real world—a child that grows up in a dysfunctional family decides for themselves to not continue in that sinful and destructive lifestyle, and so ends up living a good and fruitful life. The opposite is also true, a child who grows up in a good and loving family makes the choice to not follow their parent’s good example, and instead chooses a destructive path for themselves.

The second clear rebuttal to this *“I can’t help it, he made me do it”*, or, *“I can’t help the way I am because it’s the way I was raised”* thinking is found in the book of Revelation. Revelation chapter 20:1-6 describes the Millennial reign of Jesus on the earth: Satan is locked up for a thousand years, Christ enforces righteousness over the whole earth (see Psalm 2), and the earth is restored to what it was like in the Garden of Eden (see Isaiah 11:1-10). You would think that everyone born into this near perfect world, where Jesus is physically reigning on the earth from the temple in Jerusalem, would all naturally want to love Him and submit to Him—after all, that’s the environment that they are growing up in. However, Revelation 20:7-10 tells of what happens at the end of the 1,000 years of Jesus’ righteous reign on the earth, namely that there will be a multitude who will choose to reject Christ as their saviour, and will choose to side with satan instead. This proves beyond any doubt that all are born sinners with sinful desires, and we sin because we want to: *the problem is not my circumstances or my environment, rather the problem is in me.*

James summarises this well in James 1:12-15 NLT

God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation [their circumstances]. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. ¹³ And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, “God is tempting me.” God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. ¹⁴ **Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away.** ¹⁵ These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.

In these next few verses, Paul shows us *why* God is just or fair in making every individual personally personally and morally accountable for how they respond to the circumstances that He puts them in, and he also reveals the true attitude of those who reject their personal accountability to God.

v 20 **Will the thing formed say to him who formed it:** The main premise or point in Paul's answer to the accusation is: Because God made us, God owns us, and so He has the right to do whatever He wants with us.

Let's pretend that you own a property. You decide to plant an orange tree in the centre of your backyard. But then I come along and tell you that you are stupid for planting an orange tree, and that you should have planted a rose bush there instead. Your response to me should be, "Well Dave, if you really want to plant a rose bush in the middle of your backyard, then buy your own property so you can do what you want with it. Remember, this is my house, I own it, and so I have the right to plant whatever I want, wherever I want." One of the reasons that people enjoy owning their own homes is that they can customise the house and gardens to suit their own preferences, to reflect their own likes and dislikes (this is something that you can't do if you're renting as the property doesn't belong to you).

God has the same property ownership rights over us. Like each homeowner takes joy in customising their own property, God also "customises" each person He creates to be male or female, tall or short, musical or not musical, athletic or not athletic, brainy or not brainy, born into a rich family or poor family, born into a Christian home or a non-Christian home etc. In thinking about this, we also need to remember that in addition to God being sovereign because He made and therefore owns all things, God also loves us dearly, and therefore everything He does for us is actually for our good. Remember, *everything that God does is not only for His glory, but also for our good.* We'll come back to this at the end.

v 20 **Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?":** This is the proud and haughty attitude that people have towards God when they willingly forget that, because God made them, He therefore owns them, and therefore He has the right to do whatever He wants with them. **"Why have you made me like this?"** is a question that smacks of insubordination, a lack of respect, and a lack of submission to our all wise and all loving Creator.

v 21 **Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour?:** This leads to look back to the Old Testament where the illustration of the potter and the clay is used repeatedly. Firstly, let's look at the life story of Nebuchadnezzar. It's a good illustration of God's sovereignty in the life of a person. Even though God allows Nebuchadnezzar to make his own choices, Nebuchadnezzar comes to clearly recognise that God is in control of all the circumstances of His life. The following verses from Daniel are Nebuchadnezzar speaking after he had become proud and God had humbled him by causing him to lose his mind and eat grass like cattle.

Daniel 4:34-37 NLT

"After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped the Most High and honoured the one who lives forever. His rule is everlasting, and his kingdom is eternal. ³⁵ All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him. **He does as he pleases among the angels of heaven and among the people of the earth. No one can stop him or say to him, 'What do you mean by doing these things?'**

³⁶ "When my sanity returned to me, so did my honour and glory and kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored as head of my kingdom, with even greater honour than before.

³⁷ "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honour the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble the proud."

Now we will see some of the Old Testament references to God being the Potter who exercises His right to do whatever He wishes with the clay, while still giving individuals the freedom to accept and obey, or reject and disobey Him.

Isaiah 29:15-16 NLT

What sorrow awaits those who try to hide their plans from the Lord, who do their evil deeds in the dark! “The Lord can’t see us,” they say. “He doesn’t know what’s going on!”

¹⁶ How foolish can you be? He is the Potter, and he is certainly greater than you, the clay! Should the created thing say of the one who made it, “He didn’t make me”? Does a jar ever say, “The potter who made me is stupid”?

Isaiah 45:9-12 NLT

“What sorrow awaits those who argue with their Creator. Does a clay pot argue with its maker? Does the clay dispute with the one who shapes it, saying, ‘Stop, you’re doing it wrong!’ Does the pot exclaim, ‘How clumsy can you be?’

¹⁰ How terrible it would be if a newborn baby said to its father, ‘Why was I born?’ or if it said to its mother, ‘Why did you make me this way?’ ”

¹¹ **This is what the Lord says—the Holy One of Israel and your Creator: “Do you question what I do for my children? Do you give me orders about the work of my hands? ¹² I am the one who made the earth and created people to live on it. With my hands I stretched out the heavens. All the stars are at my command.**

In this next reference from Jeremiah, we see clearly that although man has free will, his available choices, and the consequences of those choices, are predetermined by God. This is how God can still be sovereign, even though He gives man free will to make his own decisions. It’s like a parent is still in control of their young child, even though they give their child a choice, because the choices and the consequences of those choices, good and bad, are fully decided by the parent. Again, the child can choose to obey or disobey, but either way, the available choices, and the consequences of their choices, are decided beforehand by the parent: This is a great illustration of God’s sovereignty over every person—by giving us His moral law, He has determined what choices we have (what we can choose to obey or disobey), and God has also set in place the consequences for those actions, ultimately either life or death. Remember, it’s not us who are making the choices who are in control, rather it’s the one who sets the boundaries and the consequences, good and bad, of respecting or not respecting those boundaries, who is really in control. We may think that we are in control of our lives, but really it is God who is in control. Why? He sets the rules, He is sovereign, and all of mankind is subject to Him (just like citizens of a country are subject to the law of the land as determined by their government).

Jeremiah 18:1-12 NLT

The Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, ² “Go down to the potter’s shop, and I will speak to you there.” ³ So I did as he told me and found the potter working at his wheel. ⁴ But the jar he was making did not turn out as he had hoped, so he crushed it into a lump of clay again and started over.

⁵ Then the Lord gave me this message: ⁶ “O Israel, can I not do to you as this potter has done to his clay? As the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand. ⁷ If I announce that a certain nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down, and destroyed, ⁸ but then that nation renounces its evil ways, I will not destroy it as I had planned. ⁹ And if I announce that I will plant and build up a certain nation or kingdom, ¹⁰ but then that nation turns to evil and refuses to obey me, I will not bless it as I said I would.

¹¹ “Therefore, Jeremiah, go and warn all Judah and Jerusalem. Say to them, ‘This is what the Lord says: I am planning disaster for you instead of good. So turn from your evil ways, each of you, and do what is right.’ ”

¹² But the people replied, “Don’t waste your breath. We will continue to live as we want to, stubbornly following our own evil desires [*they think that they are in control of their own destiny—they are trying to live outside of the boundaries that God has placed on them—they think that they can continue sinning and rejecting God without being judged by God—they are the clay pot telling the potter who made them that He is stupid*].”

2. Does God have the right to glorify Himself as He sees fit?

Romans 9:22-24 NKJV

What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

In these verses, Paul reflects back on his previous illustration using the Pharaoh as his example. We will come to see that Pharaoh is an example of a person (vessel) who, by his own choice, prepared himself for destruction. Let’s start with verse 22.

What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction (NKJV)

In the same way, even though God has the right to show his anger and his power, he is very patient with those on whom his anger falls, who are destined for destruction (NLT)

What if God, although fully intending to show [the awfulness of] His wrath and to make known His power and authority, has tolerated with much patience the vessels (objects) of [His] anger which are ripe for destruction? (AMP)

“Again, the same principle from God’s dealing with Pharaoh is repeated. If God chooses to glorify Himself through letting people go their own way and letting them righteously receive His wrath so as to **make His power known**, who can oppose Him?” (David Guzik)

Sin grieves God

v 22 **Endured with much longsuffering [patience]:** It is easy to forget just how much God hates sin. It is hard to understand just how hard it is for God to keep on blessing those who keep on rebelling against Him. Consider that for the sinner who never chooses to repent, God already knew they wouldn’t, but God still convicts them of sin and gives them every chance to be saved. He also blesses them with many good things in this life, even though He knows that they will never appreciate or thank Him for it. God is so good and gracious to those who hate and spurn Him, but there will come a day when His patience will end, the opportunity for for salvation will finish, and they will face the fair and righteous judgement of God.

“We must never think that God enjoyed watching a tyrant like Pharaoh. He endured it. God said to Moses, “I have surely seen the affliction of My people ... and have heard their cry ... for I know their sorrows” (Ex. 3:7). The fact that God was long-suffering indicates that He gave Pharaoh opportunities to be saved (see 2 Peter 3:9).” (Warren W. Wiersbe)

2 Peter 3:9 NKJV

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Does God prepare people for Hell (destruction)?

v 22 **The vessels of wrath prepared for destruction:** The “vessels of wrath” refer to all unbelievers, and “destruction” speaks of eternity in the Lake of Fire separated from God’s love—The Pharaoh is the example of an unbeliever. But what about “prepared for”? Who is preparing the unbelievers for destruction? *Is it themselves or God?* To understand this properly, we must go back to the original language. Warren W. Wiersbe helps us out here: “The word “prepared” in Romans 9:22 does not suggest that God made Pharaoh a “vessel of wrath.” The verb is in what the Greek grammarians call the middle voice, making it a reflexive action verb. So, it should read: “prepared himself for destruction.” God prepares men for glory (Rom. 9:23), but sinners prepare themselves for judgment. In Moses and Israel God revealed the riches of His mercy; in Pharaoh and Egypt He revealed His power and wrath. Since neither deserved any mercy, God cannot be charged with injustice.”

“Paul does not say that God has prepared them for destruction. Those vessels [people] do an adequate job on their own.” (David Guzik)

Again, verse 22 literally means, **“The vessels of wrath [who] prepared [themselves] for destruction.”** God doesn’t create, desire, or prepare anyone for destruction—the Lake of Fire (hell) was prepared for the devil and his angels (see Matthew 25:41). Instead, God does all He can to convict, convince, and woo people to accept His generous gift and stay out of that terrible place of suffering and torment (see John 3:16).

Always remember that God desires that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (see 1 Timothy 2:4). 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God gives everybody every chance to respond to His love. Figuratively, It’s over the dead body of His Son Jesus that people go to hell—they have to force themselves to willingly ignore truth and common sense, and in their place believe things that are foolish and vile.

The gospel is so simple: I have a fine that I cannot pay, Jesus paid a fine that He did not owe. If I accept Jesus’ gift of His own life in place of mine as payment for my sin debt, and willingly surrender my will to His (repentance), then I will be saved. Again, the fine or penalty has already been paid for all the sin of all mankind (see 1 John 2:2)—all a person has to do is receive the gift (see John 3:16). God literally couldn’t have made it any easier or simpler to choose to be saved and be adopted into God’s glorious family.

God prepares beforehand those whom He knows will choose Him for glory

v 23 **And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory:** Here we see the principle of God being more than fair again. No-one deserves any mercy, but here we see God giving it to anyone who is humble enough to receive it.

v 23 **Which He had prepared beforehand for glory:** Here we see God’s predestination at work. Some people are prepared for glory before they are even born. How does this work? It’s very simple. As we learned when we studied Romans 8:29, both Romans 8:29 (For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son), and 1 Peter 1:2 (elect [chosen] according to the foreknowledge of God the Father), clearly show that God chooses people according to His foreknowledge of people’s free choice to accept Him—God will never reject anyone who calls on His name (see Acts 2:21). God then sovereignly sets in motion a plan that cannot be stopped—His people, the ones who choose to accept God’s gift of eternal life, will be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ. What we learn is that God being in control of our circumstances is all a part of His plan to conform us to the image of Jesus—there is no greater or more glorious purpose—therefore, we should never doubt God’s love for us, and should therefore trust that the circumstances He is allowing in our lives, really are what is best for us in the light of eternity.

Romans 8:28-30 NKJV

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Both Jews and gentiles are invited or called to salvation

v 24 **Even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?**: It has always been a part of God's sovereign plan to also call the gentiles to salvation, not just the Jews. Why does Paul say this? Because the Jews always thought that they were better and more privileged than the gentiles (non-Jewish people).

"The Jews were inclined to think that God could not make them anything other than vessels of honour. Paul rejects this view and points out that God does what he wills." (Morris)

3. God's plan for the church—God promises to call those who were not His people, to be His people

Romans 9:25-29 NKJV

As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved." ²⁶ "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."

²⁷ Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. ²⁸ For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth." ²⁹ And as Isaiah said before: "Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah."

v 25 **You are not My people**: Paul quotes from Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 which shows the mercy of God towards Israel. "God told the prophet Hosea to name one of his children *Lo-Ammi*, meaning "Not My People." Yet God also promised that this judgment would not last forever. One day Israel will be restored and once again be called **sons of the living God**." (David Guzik) Amazingly, we see the beginning of the restoration of the nation of Israel right now.

However, the context of this quote is in reference to God choosing the gentile church while Israel is temporarily rejected or put aside—the gentiles who had not been chosen have now been chosen. However, God still chooses to [according to the promises given in the Scriptures], save a remnant of His chosen people Israel—God has not fully or permanently rejected His chosen nation.

v 27, 29 **The remnant will be saved [Isaiah 1:9]... We would have become like Sodom**: Consider that Sodom and Gomorrah were *completely* destroyed in judgment—there were no survivors. Paul is showing God's mercy towards a very rebellious Israel, in that while God could have totally destroyed them like He did Sodom and Gomorrah, He didn't, and He will always preserve a remnant. This is a special promise to the Jews, because it shows that God will keep His promise to one day bless the nation once more. This is God showing mercy in judgement.

Warren Wiersbe has a great summary of this passage:

“First Paul quoted Hosea 2:23, a statement declaring that God would turn from the Jews and call the Gentiles. Then he cited Hosea 1:10 to prove that this new people being called would be God’s people and “children of the living God.” He then quoted Isaiah 10:22–23 to show that only a remnant of Israel would be saved, while the greater part of the nation would suffer judgment. Romans 9:28 probably refers to God’s work of judgment during the Tribulation, when the nation of Israel will be persecuted and judged, and only a small remnant left to enter into the kingdom when Jesus Christ returns to earth. But the application for today is clear: only a remnant of Jews is believing; and they, together with the Gentiles, are the “called of God” (Rom. 9:24). The final quotation from Isaiah 1:9 emphasised the grace of God in sparing the believing remnant.

Now, what does all of this prove? That God was not unjust in saving some and judging others, because He was only fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies given centuries ago. He would be unjust if He did not keep His own Word. But even more than that, these prophecies show that God’s election has made possible the salvation of the Gentiles. This is the grace of God. At the Exodus, God rejected the Gentiles and chose the Jews, so that, through the Jews, He might save the Gentiles. The nation of Israel rejected His will, but this did not defeat His purposes. A remnant of Jews does believe and God’s Word has been fulfilled.

So far, Paul had defended the character of God by showing His faithfulness, His righteousness, and His justice. Israel’s rejection had not canceled God’s election; it had only proved that He was true to His character and His purposes.”

Application: Because God loves me, God’s sovereignty over my life is a good thing

The life of faith always comes back to believing two things:

- God is in complete control of the circumstances of my life
- God loves me and will only do what is best for me

When I understand God’s absolute sovereignty over the circumstances of my life is guided and directed by His love for me, then I will have no fear. Sometimes the circumstances are very difficult and involve much suffering. However, remember the eternal purpose of the circumstances that God ordains or plans for us—that we may be conformed and transformed into the image of Jesus (also see Romans 8:28-29 and 2 Corinthians 3:18).

2 Corinthians 4:7-11, 16-18 NLT

We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

⁸ We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. ⁹ We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. ¹⁰ Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

¹¹ Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. ...¹⁶ That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. ¹⁷ For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! ¹⁸ So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.